Virginia Regulatory Town Hall
Agency User Manual

Part 2:
Virginia Regulatory Town Hall

Section 4: Advanced functions

This section covers the following topics in the order listed:

- For regulatory coordinators: How to manage the Town Hall user accounts of your agency staff
- Public comment forums
- Petitions for rulemaking
- Agency mailing list
- Periodic review of regulations every four years
- Peer reviews

A publication of the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget
Economic and Regulatory Analysis Division, 11/04

How to manage the Town Hall user accounts of your agency staff

Jump down to

What information to consider and obtain before creating a Town Hall user account

When you create a new user account, you may grant the user the power to perform one or more of the following functions:

- Agency privileged viewing authority (granted to all users)
- Submit or withdraw regulatory actions
- Post and edit meetings and related meeting information
- Post and edit guidance documents
- Post peer review comments
- Access electronic mailing list information and send out messages or newsletters to customized lists
- Edit agency information and board contact information
- Post and edit general notices

Obtain from or assign to the new user (1) a User ID, and (2) a unique password. You may wish to assign all users in your agency with the same User ID, e.g., your agency initials. A password must be at least seven characters and contain at least one non-alphanumeric, e.g., !, ?

Note: Users that do not have access to certain features or pages will not able to see the links and/or buttons that link to those restricted features. If a user attempts to access a page, which they do not have permission to, the system will display an access denied page, even if the page access attempt was by directly typing in the URL of the page. If a user attempts to access a page and is not logged in, the system will prompt for the user to login.

How to create a Town Hall user account

- On the blue menu bar, click on the agency functions dropdown list and select "Manage Users."
- Click on the Add New User hyperlink.
- Enter User Information.
- Select the functions that you wish the user to be able to perform on the Town Hall. Clicking on the "Check All" button will automatically select all options, regardless of how many are currently selected.

- Select Boards. If more than one board exists for the agency, a "Check All" button will be present. Otherwise, only the single board will be listed.
- Click on "Add User."

How to edit a user account

- On the blue menu bar, click on the agency functions dropdown list and select "Manage Users."
- Navigate to the user whose account you want to edit and click the Edit hyperlink. Note: the Edit hyperlink will not be active for Agencies and Review Offices that do not have an administrator account specified.
- Update the user's data.
- Click on "Update User."

How to delete a user account

- On the blue menu bar, click on the agency functions dropdown list and select "Manage Users."
- Navigate to the user whose account you want to delete and click the Delete hyperlink. Note: the Delete hyperlink will not be active for agencies and executive branch review offices that do not have an administrator account specified.
- Click "yes" to confirm the deletion.
- The user account has been deactivated. Note: The account will not be physically removed from the database due to dependencies on other data. The deactivated account will not display on screen and will not be usable. However, it will display for historical data reports of user actions (View Action Log).

How to unlock a user account

- On the blue menu bar, click on the agency functions dropdown list and select "Manage Users."
- Navigate to the user whose account you want to unlock and click the Edit hyperlink.
- Click "Unlock User."

Why and how to view a log of your agency's actions on the Town Hall

Certain actions on the Town Hall system are recorded to help create a history of changes (audit trail) so that previous actions can be re-visited if necessary. Once the data is saved on a specific action page, a log entry is generated indicating the user who performed the action, date, and the type of action performed. The actions currently being logged are:

- Creating or editing a meeting record
- Creating or editing a guidance document
- Creating or editing a regulation info page
- Creating or editing an action infomration page
- Creating or editing a stage information page

- Editing a board information page
- Editing a secretariat information page
- Editing a agency info page
- Creating or editing a general notice
- Emailing users
- Posting peer review comments
- Changing a contact
- Making a submission or approval

In order to view a log of all your agency's actions, take the following steps:

Step 1: On the blue menu bar, click on the agency functions dropdown list and select "View logs."

Step 2: Specify search criteria and click "Search."

Back to Table of Contents

Public comment forums

Jump down to

- About the public comment forum feature
- How to open a public comment forum
- How to view, print, and save public comment forums as well as send e-mail to commenters and other Town Hall public registered users
- Violations of Town Hall user policies

About the public comment forum feature

Public comment forums allow users to submit comments, as well as view comments made by others. Currently, agencies are not required to host comment forums, however, they are relatively simple to activate and manage and you are highly encouraged to use them.

Public comment forums are open only during the official comment period for a stage. After the comment period has closed, it is possible to view all of comments made, but not to enter a new comment. Users are limited to up to three comments per forum. Each comment can be up to 750 words. All users can view comments and registered users may make comments on a forum. Users register by providing the Town Hall with their e-mail address, a password of their choosing, and certain minimal identifying information.

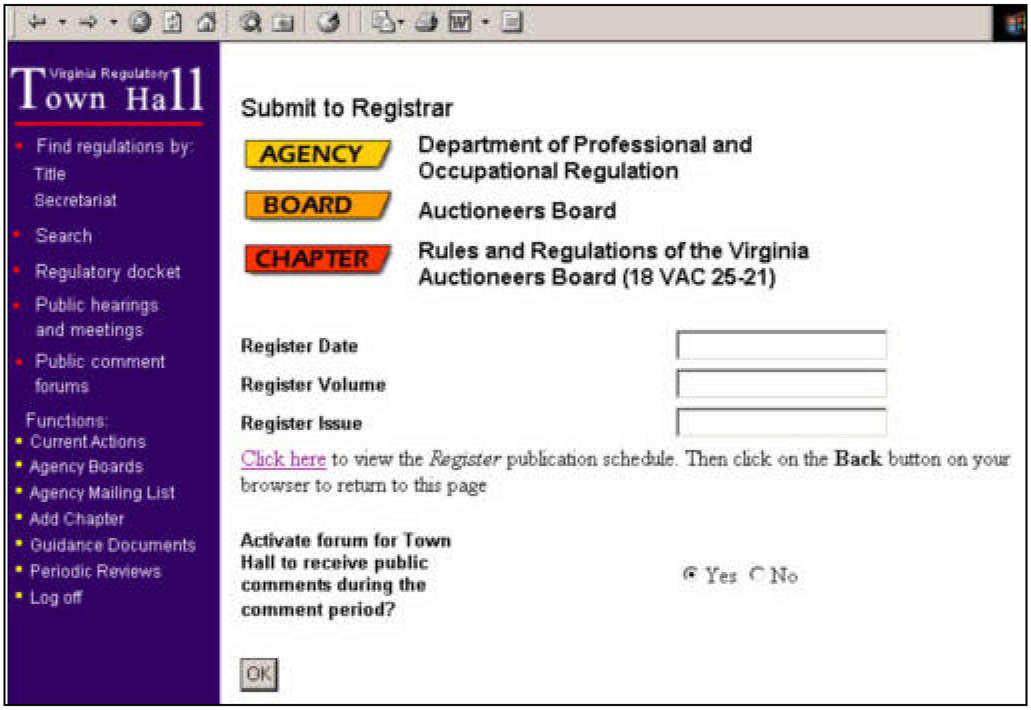
Once a public comment is submitted to a forum, it becomes part of the official record of a regulatory action and cannot be changed. However, provided the user has not already made three comments, he may enter another comment to correct or clarify a previous comment.

You can print or save to your computer all comments, as well as send e-mail to all who have commented on the regulation and/or signed up to receive notification about the regulatory action.

How to open a public comment forum

You will be given the option to open a public comment forum right before you submit a stage to the Registrar for publication.

At that time, you will click on Submit to Registrar and a screen similar to this will appear:



The forum will open on the Town Hall on the first day of the comment period (the day the stage is published in the *Register*) and will remain open for a minimum of 30 days for the NOIRA stage, 60 days for the proposed stage, or some greater length of time your agency chooses to receive comments.

How to view, print, and save public comment forums as well as send e-mail to commenters and other Town Hall public registered users

After the forum is activated, click "Public comment forums" on the menu bar and then View (or click on the View public comment forum link on the **Stage Information** page) to view all comments, as well as (1) to send e-mail all who have commented on the regulatory stage, (2) e-mail all users on your notification list for that action, (3) print comments, or (4) save comments to your computer.

Violations of Town Hall User policies

Should a comment violate user policies, DPB may hide the comment from public view on the Town Hall. Examples of violations would be posting any information that is unlawful, harmful, threatening, defamatory, obscene, or invasive of privacy. While objectionable comments may be hidden, they will continue to be visible to regulatory coordinators and part of the public record. The Town Hall will monitor public comments for violations of user policies, however, if you notice an objectionable comment, please contact DPB (804-786-6315).

Back to Table of Contents

Petitions for rulemaking

Jump down to

What is a petition for rulemaking?

A petition for rulemaking is a request by a person(s) to an agency/board to develop a new regulation or amend an existing regulation. See a regulatory process chart for petitions for rulemaking. The Town Hall manages the process for submitting petitions for rulemaking to the Registrar, and provides the public with notice and opportunities for comment on a petition for rulemaking.

How to submit a petition for rulemaking on the Town Hall

- On the blue menu bar, click on the agency functions dropdown list and select "Petition List."
- Click on the Add Petition hyperlink.
- Enter petition information.
- Click "Add Petition." Your petition has now been submitted to the Registrar for publication.
- Notes: (1) If the agency has more than one board in the board dropdown list, the checkboxes for the associated regulations to the board will not be displayed until a board is selected. (2) If the agency has only one board, then the board name will be displayed automatically instead of the board dropdown list. (3) If any of the regulation checkboxes in the existing regulations are selected, the checkbox for the existing regulations will be selected automatically. (4) Unchecking the existing regulation checkbox will automatically uncheck all the regulation checkboxes

How to edit a petition for rulemaking on the Town Hall

- On the blue menu bar, click on the agency functions dropdown list and select "Petition List."
- Navigate to the petition which you want to edit and click the Petition Title hyperlink to go to the **Petition Information** page.
- Click on the Edit Petition hyperlink. Note: The board field cannot be edited. The board has to be selected during the creation of the petition.
- Update the data.
- Click on "Save Changes."

How to post a petition result

- On the blue menu bar, click on the agency functions dropdown list and select "Petition List."
- Navigate to the petition which you want to edit and click the Petition Title hyperlink to go to the **Petition Information** page.
- Click the Post Petition Result hyperlink. Note: The Post Petition Result hyperlink will only be active within the 90-day timeframe following the end of the petition comment period.
- Enter petition result information.
- Click on "Post Result."

How to associate a petition with a regulatory action

During the creation of a petition, new or existing regulations can be assigned to associate with the new petition. If the "New Regulation" checkbox is selected, the petition will be listed in the Associated Petition dropdown list on the **Add Action** page of a new regulation. If any of the existing regulation checkboxes are selected, the petition will be listed in the Associated Petition dropdown list on the **Edit Action** page of the checked regulations.

- On the blue menu bar, click on the agency functions dropdown list and select "Current Actions."
- Navigate to the regulatory action which you want to associate a petition with and click the Action Title hyperlink to go to the **Action Information** page.
- Click on the Edit Action hyperlink.
- Select a petition in the Associated Petition dropdown list. Note: The Associated Petition dropdown list will only be active when a petition was associated to the regulation of the selected action. It will list the petitions that do not have petition results and have not been associated to other actions.
- Click on "Save Changes."

How to associate a petition with a new regulation (VAC chapter)

If the "New Regulation" checkbox is selected on the **Add/Edit Petition** page for a board, the Associated Petition dropdown list will be displayed on the **Add Chapter** page during the creation of a new chapter.

- On the blue menu bar, click on the agency functions dropdown list and select "Add chapter."
- Select a petition from the Associated Petition dropdown list. Note: Only the petitions that do not have results will be in the dropdown list
- Click "Add Chapter." Note: After the new regulation is created, a checkbox for the new regulation will be added to the Existing Regulations on the **Edit Petition** page.

Back to Table of Contents

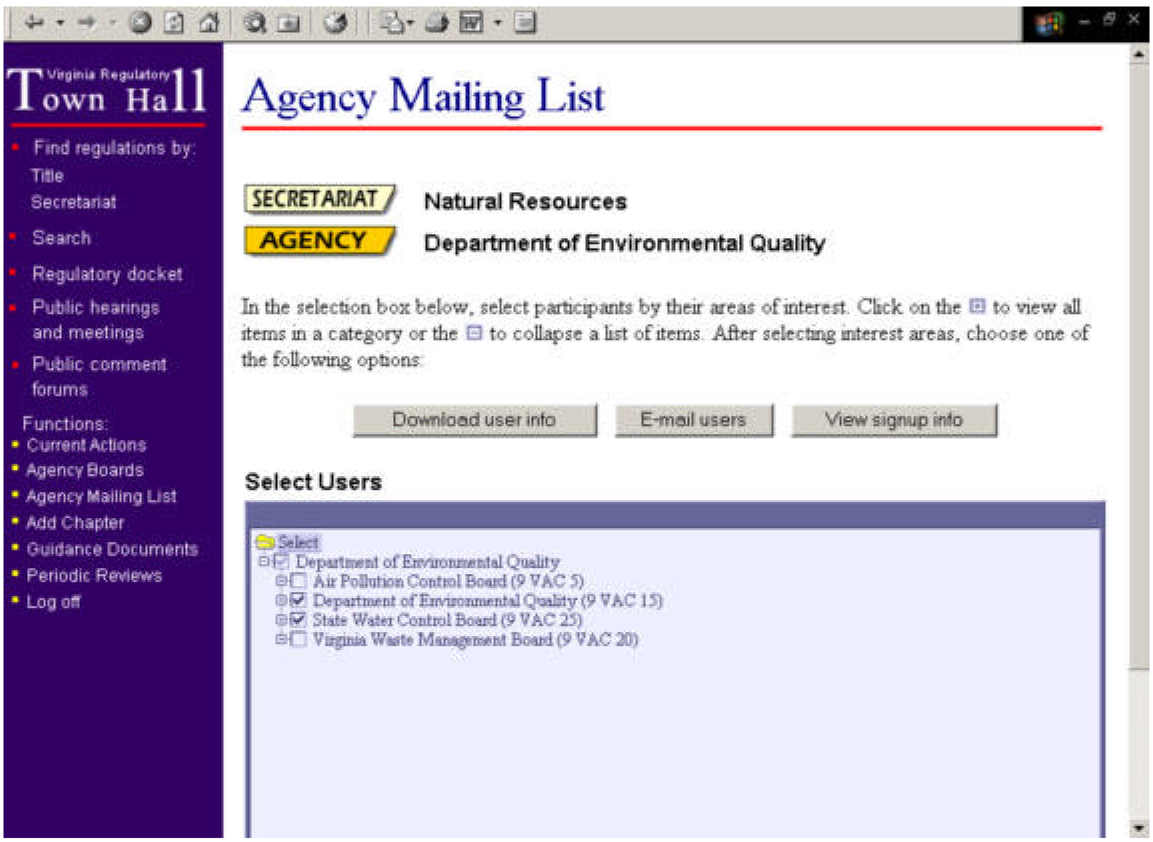
Agency mailing list

Jump down to

About the agency mailing list feature

You may use the agency mailing list function to send e-mail to users who have signed up on your notification list, as well as to view and download user information associated with any board or regulations of your agency.

Click on the Agency Mailing List link on the blue menu bar and you will see a screen like that below.



To view sign-up information

- Using the selection box, select users for whom you wish to view sign-up information. You can choose all users on your notification list or users interested in particular boards or regulations.
- Click on View sign-up info.

- On this screen, you can view users' names, organizations, and phone numbers.
- By clicking on the name link, you can view even more user information.

How to send e-mail to users

- Using the selection box, select users for whom you wish to send e-mail. You can choose all users on your notification lists or users interested in particular boards or regulations.
- Click on E-mail users.
- If necessary, modify the e-mail address where replies will be directed.
- After you write e-mail, press "Send" button at the bottom of the page.

How to save user information to your computer

- Note: This program will display information in Microsoft Access.
- Using the selection box, select users for which you wish to download user information. You can choose all users or users interested in particular boards or regulations.
- Click on Download user info.
- Choose either "Open this file from its current location" or "Save this file to disk." (If you save this file to your computer, you will probably want to give it another name.)

Back to Table of Contents

Periodic review of regulations

Executive Order 21 (2002) requires that all regulations be reviewed at least once every four years. This means that, in the last four years, if a regulation has not been either (1) subject to a regulatory action, or (2) comprehensively reviewed by the agency/board, it is appropriate to publish a Notice of Periodic Review in the Register. The Notice of Periodic Review invites comments on the entire regulation.

The Town Hall facilitates the periodic review process by (1) notifying you about an upcoming periodic review, (2) allowing you to request the Registrar to publish a notice of periodic review, and (3) notifying users who have signed up for e-mail notification.

Jump down to

- How to submit a periodic review on the Town Hall
- How to submit a periodic review to the Registrar
- How to report the result of my periodic review

How to submit a periodic review on the Town Hall

Step 1: Click on **Agency Boards** on the blue menu bar, then on the relevant board name. Click on the VAC citation of the regulation you wish to amend so that the **Regulation Information** page for that regulation is displayed.

Step 2: Click on the "Edit Chapter" button. Scroll midway down the page. Enter the following information:

- **Date of next review:** Enter the date you wish to submit the "Notice of Public Comment Period" for publication in the *Register*.
- **Goals of the regulation:** List the specific and measurable goals for the regulation. Every regulation will have at least one goal, that is, to protect public health, safety, and welfare with the least possible costs and intrusiveness to the citizens and businesses of the Commonwealth.

Click on "Save Changes."

Step 3: Go to the Regulation Information page and click on the "Add Periodic Review" button near the bottom of the page in the "Periodic Review" section. Enter the following information:

- **Date comment period begins:** The beginning date is the date the notice of periodic review will appear in the *Register*. Enter the date numerically, e.g., 07/20/2005.
- **Date comment period ends:** This date should be no earlier than 20 days after this notice is published in the *Register*.
- **Review announcement:** This field is optional and may be completed or edited at any time before the review announcement is sent to the Registrar. If you do not complete this field, the Register will contain a standard periodic review announcement. Click here to see a sample review announcement.

How to submit a periodic review to the Registrar

Click on the "Periodic Reviews" link on the blue menu bar and then click on the appropriate regulation. This will take you to the **Periodic Review Information** page. Click on the "Submit to Registrar" button. Your review announcement has now been sent to the Registrar.

How to report the result of my periodic review

No later than 90 days after your notice of periodic review is published in the Register, you must complete the review report using one of the following agency background statements: (1) Periodic Review / Retain Regulation, (2) NOIRA, or (3) Exempt Action – Final (depending on the rules governing your agency, Exempt Action – Proposed). After you have completed one of these forms, follow the instructions below as appropriate.

Periodic review: No change

Step 1: Click on “Periodic Reviews” on the blue menu bar then on the status link to the appropriate Periodic Review.

Step 2: Click on the “Edit Review” button near the top of the page. Then scroll down to the bottom of the page.

Step 3: Click on “Retain without changes” and select the “Browse” button to upload a completed “Periodic Review / Retain Regulation” form.

Step 4: Click on the “Save Changes” button. You’re done.

Periodic Review: Regulation will be changed

If the review result is "amend" or "terminate," you must **first** start an action and submit either a NOIRA stage (for non-exempt regulations) or a Final stage (for exempt regulations) before making any of the following changes to the Periodic Review function. Click here to start an action.

Step 1: Click on “Periodic Reviews” on the blue menu bar then on the status link to the appropriate Periodic Review.

Step 2: Click on the “Edit Review” button near the top of the page. Then scroll down to the bottom of the page.

Step 3: Click either “Regulation to be amended” or “Regulation to be terminated.” Do **not** upload a file at the periodic review page if the recommendation is to amend or terminate.

Step 4: Click on the “Save Changes” button. You’re done.

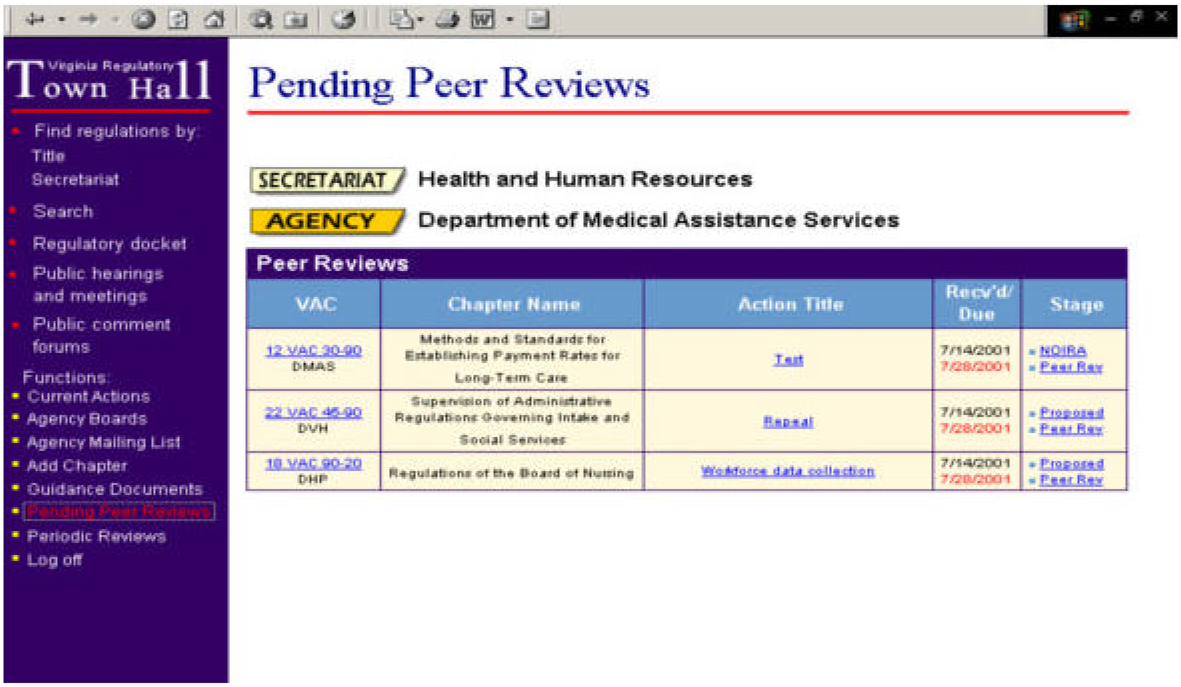
Back to Table of Contents

Peer reviews

Currently, peer reviews are limited to agencies of the Health and Human Resources secretariat.

Peer review allows cabinet secretaries to assign to agencies other than the promulgating agency the task of reviewing a regulatory action. This feature is designed to increase communication between agencies on issues of mutual concern, as well as to allow agencies to provide advice to the appropriate Cabinet Secretary and the Governor. The Town Hall manages the process of assigning peer reviews, stores agency comments electronically, creates peer review pending lists for agencies, and notifies agencies by e-mail of peer review deadlines.

When your agency is assigned a peer review, your **Pending Peer Reviews** screen will look something like this:



- If your agency has been asked to provide a peer review, the Pending Peer Review link on your menu bar will turn red.
- By clicking on this link, you will see all information and links to information about the peer review which has been assigned to your agency, including the regulation name, action title, stage, when the review was received, and the peer review due date which is 14 days from the day of receipt.
- To enter a comment, click on the Peer Rev link (under Stage column).
- Click on Add peer review comments.
- Choose one of the following to reflect your agency's position on the regulatory action: not relevant, relevant/concur, relevant/do not concur.
- Insert or type comment. Bear in mind that this comment cannot be changed later.
- When finished, click "Submit Agency Comments" at the bottom of the screen.

Back to Table of Contents